

# Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee

1<sup>st</sup> March 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

## Approval of the Policy for the Use of Jubilee Square

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Fran Wallis, Local Economy Project Officer
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	High Street Ward

### **This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the proposed policy governing the use of Jubilee Square is agreed.
2. That the pricing schedule set out in paragraph 5.8.1 in Appendix 1 of the report is agreed.
3. That the progress towards establishing a Farmers Market on Jubilee Square is noted.

### **This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – by ensuring that Jubilee Square is used for high quality events
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – by making Jubilee Square more vibrant, footfall and dwell time will increase.

### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee	1 March 2016

# Approval of the Policy for the Use of Jubilee Square

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree a policy for the use of Jubilee Square. Since the Square was created, it has been used for a range of different events, festivals, and promotional activities but there has been no agreed management or promotional policy for its use. This report, seeks to address this, making it clear what uses will be acceptable on the Square, how it will be managed and pricing structure.
  - 1.2 The policy will make it clear to those wishing to book the Square what process they must follow and at what cost. Income from commercial activities on the Square may then be used to support community and charity events.
  - 1.3 The Policy for the use of Jubilee Square supports the Council's ambitions to become more commercial in its activities. In addition, by making the Square more vibrant with increased activity, it is hoped that this will in turn increase footfall and dwell time in the town centre, thus supporting town centre businesses.
  - 1.4 This report also provides an update on progress on the proposed Farmers Market in Jubilee Square.
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## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Policy for the Use of Jubilee Square

- 2.2 Jubilee Square was created as part of the High Street Public Realm Improvement Project in 2012. Prior to these works, the junction of the High Street and Week Street was very 'traffic orientated' and Maidstone lacked a central 'town square'. Brenchley Gardens, the front of County Hall and the official Town Square at Lockmeadow are on the periphery of the town and lack footfall.
- 2.3 Since Jubilee Square was created, there has not been a coherent policy on its use, which has led to this prominent and high quality asset being under-utilised. The Square is available throughout the year for commercial activities as well as community and charity events. In the summer of 2015, the management of the Square came under the Parks and Open Spaces Team, which is part of Commercial and Economic Development.
- 2.4 Since then, officers have been working towards agreeing a policy which will allow for greater clarity both for those who wish to book the Square, but also for officers taking the bookings. Agreement has been reached with officers on the types of activity which was determined to be of benefit to the town, and an appropriate level of cost, given its central location and high levels of footfall.

2.5 The Square is a key asset in the town, with facilities including in-ground electricity points, served by numerous bus routes, and is on the natural route between Fremlin Walk and The Mall. The entrance of Week Street sees an average of 2,500 – 3,000 people walking past per hour. By promoting the Square and what it has to offer for commercial uses at a higher rate, there will be scope for community and charity uses to use the Square at a reduced rate, and still keep the management of it viable.

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### **3. FARMERS MARKET**

3.1 An additional piece of work which has been progressing alongside the development of the Policy for Jubilee Square is the Farmers Market. Officers from Economic Development have met with the Kent Farmers Market Association, and Produced in Kent, to discuss how best to introduce a Farmers Market in the town centre.

3.2 Jubilee Square was identified as the obvious choice to hold the market. A Farmers Market was previously held outside County Hall several years ago, but proved unsuccessful due to low footfall. Lockmeadow was also discounted for the same reason – low footfall and visibility.

3.3 The proposal is to hold the market on a Friday - by analysing footfall data, Jubilee Square is shown to consistently have 3,000 – 4,000 people on the Square per hour, during the day on a Friday. Apart from Saturdays, Fridays generally have the highest footfall, and are the most consistent regardless of time of year/weather. Saturdays were discounted for various reasons:

- Most market traders are already committed to other Farmers Markets on a Saturday.
- Saturday footfall is more affected by weather and seasonality – Fridays offer a more 'guaranteed' number of potential visitors.
- Saturday is a popular day for other events to be held on the Square e.g. St Georges Day Parade, Arts Festivals etc.
- Fridays are more likely to target people who work in the town, who are therefore more likely to become regular visitors to the market.

3.4 The proposal is for the Farmers Market to be held monthly, on the fourth Friday of every month. This will coincide with most people's pay day. Fortnightly markets were initially considered, but it was felt that this may put potential traders off, if they had to commit to such a regular market initially. Kent Farmers Market Association (KFMA) advised to start monthly, to test the appetite of both traders and shoppers. Most Farmers Markets around the county are held on a monthly basis. Once the Farmers Market is established, there will be scope to increase its frequency. If the Council started with a fortnightly market and it struggled to attract traders or shoppers, then to 'downgrade' it to a monthly market would be seen as a 'bad news story' for the town.

3.5 The Markets Team have established that up to 32 stalls can fit on Jubilee Square. Consequently a planning application will be submitted, to allow for

this. In addition, street trading consents are being applied for, for the wide variety of traders which we hope to have on the market. Street trading consents take up to 90 days for approval.

- 3.6 KFMA suggested that an approximate ratio of 80:20 for farm/produce:crafts for a successful market. The Market Team also has their own personal experience of Farmers Markets and advise that this ratio gives the right balance to keep the market sustainable.
- 3.7 Once the Planning Application and the Street Trading Consents have been approved, the Farmers Market will open in June 2016.

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#### **4. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Option 1: Do nothing – i.e. do not agree to the Policy. This will mean that there is no coherent management or promotion of the site. Without this, the Square will continue to be under-utilised.
- 4.2 Option 2: Agree to the Policy on the Use of Jubilee Square set out in Appendix 1. This will allow for more effective management and promotion of the Square, as outlined above.

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#### **5. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 It is recommended that this Committee approve Option 2 – as set out in Appendix 1 as it will allow officers within the Commercial and Economic Development department to have greater control over what the Square can be used for, and the costs for using it. It will also allow those wishing to hire the Square to have greater clarity on the costs involved.
- 5.2 By agreeing to a higher rate for commercial activities, the Council will then be able to offer the Square at a reduced rate to community and charity events, whilst still being able to cover costs incurred.

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#### **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 There has been consultation internally with officers who are involved in the management of the Square. In addition, Town Centre Management has been involved in the formation of the Policy, given the number of enquiries that go through them first.

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#### **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 7.1 Once the policy has been agreed, a copy of it will be uploaded to the Borough Council website, allowing anyone with a view to booking the Square to be able to see it. The Policy will come into effect on an agreed date (suggestion of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016), with scope for it to be reviewed after 1 year to ensure that the Policy is working effectively.

## 8. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – by ensuring that Jubilee Square is used for high quality events.</p> <p>Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – by making Jubilee Square more vibrant, footfall and dwell time will increase.</p>	Head of Service Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	There is minimal risk associated with the Jubilee Square Policy – the policy will mitigate any potential reputational risk by making the process clearer for all.	[Head of Service or Manager]
<b>Financial</b>	The proposals as set out in the report are intended to cover the costs of managing the Square and the market.	Head of Service Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Staffing</b>	There is a potential requirement for a member of staff to be on site at unsociable hours, to check the in-ground power units for each booking. The current markets team will manage the Farmers Market.	Head of Service Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Legal</b>	<p>The Council does not own the site, but manages it under a licence from Kent Highways. The licence has been in place since 2012 and expires 30 April 2016. However, Legal has been informed that an approach for the extension of the licence has been made and no issue with the extension is anticipated. The licence gives the Council permission to run temporary events and set up temporary associated equipment.</p> <p>Members should note that the licence does not give the Council</p>	Deputy Head of the Legal Partnership

	<p>exclusive use of the square so others could use it, subject to obtaining the necessary permissions. Although our proposed Policy sets out various prohibitions for use of the square, the Council's powers to enforce those prohibitions are uncertain as the Council does not own the land. The final point to note is that there is a slight financial risk in that any commercial charges we make could be subject to possible future claims if anyone claiming ownership of the land came forward.</p> <p>These are all fairly slight risks, since the Council has operated the land successfully for a number of years. However, they are issues which the Committee needs to note in order to make an informed decision.</p>	
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	N/A	[Policy & Information Manager]
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	N/A	[Head of Service or Manager]
<b>Community Safety</b>	N/A	[Head of Service or Manager]
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	N/A	[Head of Service or Manager]
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A	[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
<b>Asset Management</b>	Although the Square is Highways and hence the responsibility of KCC, MBC have taken on the management of the site.	Head of Service Commercial and Economic Development

## 9. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Policy on the Use of Jubilee Square
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## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.